



Poverty map of part of London, 1889; darker areas show slums or “rookeries”

Home Market

Marx's first concern in his description of Primitive Accumulation is to establish where the labour power came from, in the metropolitan countries where capitalism was established as a system for the first time, and where it eventually proved itself to be even more profitable than the slave trade that stole people from Africa and worked them to death on plantations in North and South America and in the Caribbean islands.

The expectation that the reader brings, on seeing the phrase “primitive accumulation”, is therefore not necessarily fulfilled. It is not the case that a hoard of money was first created, whether by plunder or by any other means, so as to purchase the commencement of capitalism. Rather, it was a case of piecing together the component parts of the capitalist system, which

were: the bourgeois class that had arisen from the peasantry; the dispossessed “free labouring” proletariat, also originally peasants; and the ready market for commodities constituted by both of these two new classes, together.

This new abundance of available labour-power in the metropolis, personified in citizens without property, was the consequence of deliberate dispossession. It had the immediate, further consequence of producing what we now call “unemployment”, which was immediately criminalised as “vagrancy”. The unemployment was an essential precondition for capitalism to arise, yet the bourgeoisie in its eternal, cruel hypocrisy, criminalised its own victims.

Our text today, downloadable via the link given below, is a compilation of Chapters 28, 29 and 30 from Marx’s “Capital”, Volume 1. It describes a time, long ago, when the slogan could have been “Capitalism is the future, build it now”. The elements of capitalism were being assembled then.

Chapter 28 is an easy read detailing the legal steps in the original case, that of England.

Having shown where their labour-power came from, Marx at the beginning of Chapter 29 asks “whence came the capitalists originally?” This very short chapter answers the question in the case of the capitalist farmers, who were the necessary original capitalists, and who were already a historically-existing class in England by the late 16th century (and from which class later came, for example, [Oliver Cromwell](#)).

In Chapter 30, Marx turns his attention to the question of just how yet another of the necessary pre-requisites of capitalism came into being, namely the “home market”. The very same peasants who had been thrown off the land into the towns to live in shacks had to eat, whether they were working or not, and the farms that they had left were still the only source of food. Thus was set in motion the relation of demand and supply, and also of concentration of industries into “manufactories” as opposed to the family-scale production of earlier times. These kinds of changes can still be observed as they happen, in South Africa today.

Good images of the slums of England, also once known as “rookeries”, the equivalent of South Africa’s present-day “informal settlements”, less politely called “squatter camps”, are hard to find. The illustration above is from the “Poverty Map” of part of the East End of London, prepared by or on the orders of [Charles Booth](#), a “philanthropist”. The red areas are “middle class, well-to-do”, light blue areas are “poor, 18s to 21s a week for a moderate family”, dark blue areas are “very poor, casual, chronic want”, and black areas are the “lowest class...occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals”.

Booth’s survey found that 35% of London’s huge 1889 population of between 5 and 6 million was living in poverty.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Capital V1, C28, 29, 30, Expropriated, Farmer, and Home Market](#).
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